

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

STEVE SANDS,

Plaintiff,

- against -

CHRISTIANITY TODAY INTERNATIONAL

Defendant.

Docket No. 1:19-cv-5379

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff Steve Sands (“Sands” or “Plaintiff”) by and through his undersigned counsel, as and for his Complaint against Defendant Christianity Today International (“Christianity” or “Defendant”) hereby alleges as follows:

**NATURE OF THE ACTION**

1. This is an action for copyright infringement under Section 501 of the Copyright Act. This action arises out of Defendant’s unauthorized reproduction and public display of a copyrighted photograph actress Kristen Stewart and actor Jesse Eisenberg on the set of Woody Allen’s movie Café Society, owned and registered by Sands, a professional photographer. Accordingly, Sands seeks monetary relief under the Copyright Act of the United States, as amended, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*

**JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

2. This claim arises under the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*, and this Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338(a).

3. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant resides and/or transacts business in Illinois.

4. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b).

### **PARTIES**

5. Sands is a professional photographer in the business of licensing his photographs to online and print media for a fee having a usual place of business at 568 Grand Street, Apt. J903, New York, New York 10002.

6. Upon information and belief, Christianity is a domestic corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of Illinois, with a place of business at 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188. Upon information and belief, Christianity is registered with the Illinois Department of Corporations to do business in Illinois. At all times material, hereto, Christianity has owned and operated a website at the URL: [www.ChristianityToday.com](http://www.ChristianityToday.com) (the “Website”).

### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

#### **A. Background and Plaintiff’s Ownership of the Photograph**

7. Sands photographed actress Kristen Stewart and actor Jesse Eisenberg on the set of Woody Allen’s movie Café Society (the “Photograph”). A true and correct copy of the Photograph is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

8. Sands is the author of the Photograph and has at all times been the sole owner of all right, title and interest in and to the Photograph, including the copyright thereto.

10. The Photograph is registered with the United States Copyright Office and given registration number VA 2-007-340.

#### **B. Defendant’s Infringing Activities**

11. Christianity ran an article on the Website entitled *Café Society*. The article featured the Photograph. See: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/july-web-only/cafe-society.html>. A screen shot of the article with the Photograph is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

12. Christianity did not license the Photograph from Plaintiff for its Website, nor did Christianity have Plaintiff's permission or consent to publish the Photograph on its Website.

13. Plaintiff first discovered the Photograph on the Website in October 2018.

**CLAIM FOR RELIEF**  
**(COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AGAINST CHRISTIANITY)**  
**(17 U.S.C. §§ 106, 501)**

14. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-13 above.

15. Christianity infringed Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph by reproducing and publicly displaying the Photograph on the Website. Christianity is not, and has never been, licensed or otherwise authorized to reproduce, publically display, distribute and/or use the Photograph.

16. The acts of Defendant complained of herein constitute infringement of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright in violation of Sections 106 and 501 of the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 106 and 501.

17. Upon information and belief, the foregoing acts of infringement by Christianity have been willful, intentional, and purposeful, in disregard of and indifference to Plaintiff's rights.

18. As a direct and proximate cause of the infringement by the Defendant of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright, Plaintiff is entitled to damages and defendant's profits pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(b) for the infringement.

19. Alternatively, Plaintiff is entitled to statutory damages up to \$150,000 per work infringed for Defendant's willful infringement of the Photograph, pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(c).
20. Plaintiff further is entitled to his attorney's fees and full costs pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505.

### **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment as follows:

1. That Defendant Christianity be adjudged to have infringed upon Plaintiff's copyrights in the Photograph in violation of 17 U.S.C §§ 106 and 501;
2. Plaintiff be awarded either: a) Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's Photograph; or b) alternatively, statutory damages of up to \$150,000 per copyrighted work infringed pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504;
3. That Defendant be required to account for all profits, income, receipts, or other benefits derived by Defendant as a result of its unlawful conduct;
4. That Plaintiff be awarded his costs, expenses and attorneys' fees pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505;
5. That Plaintiff be awarded pre-judgment interest; and
6. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

### **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Dated: Valley Stream, New York

August 9, 2019

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